United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

◆ Cyrus Vance visits Vukovar to examine possibility of United Nations peace-keeping operation in Yugoslavia and to consider what can be done to address humanitarian needs of civilian population.

◆ General Assembly approves implementation of United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia; calls on all parties to fully comply with the Paris Agreements.

◆ Sadruddin Aga Khan states that he is "surprised and discouraged" at reports of alleged financial mismanagement of Afghanistan humanitarian mission under his stewardship.

◆ United Nations team completes five-week "super mission" to catalog contents of vast Iraqi chemical weapons facility.

◆ Social Committee begins human rights debate, receives reports on Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait under Iraqi occupation.

◆ Speakers in Economic and Financial Committee say success of Environment and Development Conference depends on agreement for resources and technology transfers.

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The Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Mr. Cyrus Vance, visited Vukovar in the eastern part of Croatia yesterday, under arrangements made by the Yugoslav National Army. The object of the visit was to observe a scene of recent fighting in the context of the mandate given to him by the Secretary-General to examine the feasibility of mounting a United Nations peace-keeping operation in Yugoslavia, and to convey to all involved the Secretary-General's concern that everything possible be done to address the humanitarian needs of the civilian population.

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Mr. Vance was shown parts of the heavily damaged town and visited a reception centre for displaced civilians established by the Yugoslavia National Army, as well as a temporary hospital caring for civilian and military casualties.

He also saw a Yugoslav National Army barrack in the town that had been blockaded until recently by Croatian forces. In talking to journalists, Mr. Vance voiced distress at the human suffering and widespread destruction of property that had taken place. While in Vukovar, where he was also accompanied by a representative of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Vance repeatedly stressed the need to address the pressing humanitarian needs of the population affected by the conflict there.

Mr. Vance is in Yugoslavia accompanied by Under-Secretary-General Marrack Goulding and a team of officials. This is his third fact-finding mission to Yugoslavia in the past month. Last night in Zagreb, he had detailed discussions with the President of Croatia, Mr. Tudjman and his colleagues.

Today, in Zagreb, Mr. Vance and the team were scheduled to meet with Croatian Foreign Minister Separovic, Prime Minister Gregoric, Chairman Kadic, as well as with military authorities. He would also meet with the European Community monitor mission and with President Tudjman. Mr. Vance plans to go to Belgrade tomorrow to continue discussions with the authorities there.

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After hearing a statement by its President Samir S. Shihabi (Saudi Arabia), the General Assembly this afternoon adopted, without a vote, a resolution approving the implementation of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC).

Before the move, Mr. Shihabi pointed out that, as part of the agreement "between those directly concerned", it was decided that there would be no debate of the item in the Assembly.

By this afternoon's decision, the Assembly called on all parties to the Cambodian conflict to comply fully with the cease-fire that entered into force at the time of the Paris Agreements signed on 24 October, and urged the parties to fully implement the terms of the agreement, in close cooperation with the UNTAC. It also urged continued support for the process of repatriation of the Cambodian refugees and displaced persons under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and for the rehabilitation and reconstruction for Cambodia.

Other provisions of the resolution include a commitment to self-determination for the Cambodian people through free and fair elections organized and conducted by the UNTAC, and full respect for and full observance of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Cambodian people.

In his statement, Mr. Shihabi said the adoption of the draft would mark an historic occasion for the people of Cambodia. He expressed appreciation

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for the support and assistance of the international community, especially for the humanitarian aid rendered to the Cambodian people since 1978. This action, he said, had made the Paris Agreements possible.

Last month the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Council at the earliest date possible, his implementation plan for the UNTAC, including a detailed estimate of its costs.

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The Secretary-General's Delegate, Sadruddin Aga Khan, has stated that he is "surprised and discouraged" at reports of alleged financial mismanagement of the Afghanistan humanitarian mission under his stewardship.

A United Nations spokeswoman told correspondents today that Sadruddin Aga Khan was currently in Baghdad where he is negotiating the future of the Organization's humanitarian activities in Iraq.The spokeswoman said Sadruddin Aga Khan had welcomed the efforts of the acting Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management to ascertain all of the facts and was confident that the allegations would be proven false.

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A 50-member United Nations team recently concluded an exhaustive inspection of the vast Iraqi chemical weapons facility near Samarra, finding that the quantities of chemical-weapons-related materials at the site for the most part agreed with the amounts initially declared by Iraq. The team inspected hundreds of tonnes of other chemical warfare agents, as well as thousands of tonnes of other chemicals. Some deviation from the declared quantities were discovered, and these will be the subject of further investigation.

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The interrelationship between human rights, democracy and development was emphasized yesterday by Jan Martenson, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights. He was addressing the General Assembly's Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) as it began its debate on human rights questions and situations.

Mr. Martenson said that a crucial relationship existed between human rights, democracy and development. Respect for human rights required good governance, popular participation and an independent judiciary.

Also addressing the Committee, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Afghanistan, Felix Ermacora, focused on the more than 6 million refugees in that country, saying that was more than a third of the population.

The Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in occupied Kuwait, Walter Kalin, said his interim report addressed the status of prisoners of war, whose rights were being violated under the 1949 Geneva Convention. He

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noted that the fate of the still-missing persons -- numbering 2101 according to a new list from the Government of Kuwait -- must be explored in future reports.

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Agreement must be reached on providing additional financial resources and technology transfer to developing countries if the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was to succeed, the General Assembly's Economical and Financial Committee was told, yesterday.

The Committee was concluding its debate on next summer's Environment and Development Conference in Brazil and on the protection of global climate.

Some speakers said the progress made by in preparation for the Conference had been disappointing, particularly regarding the two key issues of resources and transfers of technology.

Other speakers warned of the danger that the Rio Conference would become so concerned with resources that it would become a pledging conference during which the critical issues of international policy might be forgotten.

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